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Truth's Triumph

OVER

ERROR;

IN THE

ISSUE of the PROCESS

AGAINST

Mr. *John Simſon*,

Profeſſor of Divinity in the Univerſity of *Glaſgow*;

Together with ſome Account of the SENTENCE of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the Church of *Scotland* concerning him, *May* 16th 1728.

In a LETTER *to a Friend.*

EDINBURGH,
Printed in the Year MDCCXXVIII.

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Truth's Triumph

OVER

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AGAINST

Mr. John Simson,

Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow.

Printed in the Year M.DCC.XXVIII.

TRUTH's Triumph over ERROR, &c.

SIR,

HAVING attended this Affair of Mr. *John Simſon* Profeſſor of Divinity in the Univerſity of *Glaſgow*, in ſeveral of the Judicatories before whom it hath been managed, I have had Occaſion to obſerve the various Turns it hath taken; and, tho' ſometimes Matters appeared to have a very diſmal Aſpect, yet I could not but take notice, that the watchful Care of our Bleſſed Redeemer, the chief Shepherd, did remarkably interpoſe, for the Preſervation of Truth and Peace, which were both in great Danger in the Courſe of this Proceſs.

And now, That this *Assembly*, after suc mature Deliberation, long and strenuou Pleadings and Reasonings, which to the ve ry last, appeared to be so distant from on another, have centered *unanimously* in a Sen tence, wherein, I hope, every judiciou Person will be persuaded of *the Triumph Truth over Error*, tho' they may differ a to their Thoughts of what Censure shoul have been inflicted on Mr. *Simson*; I can not but admire the Goodness of God, an his Pity to this poor Church.

I must indeed observe, That thro' all th Debates in the *Assembly*, no Man ever pre tended to maintain or defend the Error themselves, charged upon Mr. *Simson*, bu commonly introduced their Speeches in the Cause, with a Profession of their Soundnes in these Points: The Difference was chiefl as to some Circumstances of his Case, which they thought did either aggravate or allevi ate his Crime, or, as to the Weight and E vidence of the Proof against him, or the Re gard that should be had to what Grounds were offered for his Exculpation, and to his own Professions of Orthodoxy and Explica tions of his Words which were charged with Unsoundness, or what Sentence should be inflicted. And indeed here was such a large Field for Reasoning, and these appeared for many *Sederunts* to be of such a different Strain, that it was not expected that any Sen-

Sentence could have been concluded without a Vote, or carried but by a very ſmall Plurality. And whatever *that* Sentence had been, 'tis more than probable, that a Diviſion on ſuch a weighty Affair, would have been of dangerous Conſequence to this Church, if not to other Churches, whoſe Eyes have been upon us, waiting the Iſſue of this Proceſs.

Great were the Thoughts of Heart, and the Tremblings of the Lord's People, leſt the Ark of God ſhould have got a wrong Touch in this Affair. How gloomy, and yet probable was the Aſpect thereof, when the *Committee* appointed by the *Aſſembly* the 15th Inſtant to deliberate upon *an Overture* to be laid before them next Day, could come to no Manner of Agreement, tho' they continued together the beſt Part of that Night, and at length parted without coming to any Reſolution; and when they had ſpent many Hours next Day, could agree in nothing but the common Narrative of the Sentence, and that the reſpective Opinions for *ſuſpending* or *depoſing* ſhould be laid before the *Aſſembly*.

How frighful was the View, upon the one Hand, that no higher Cenſure than a *Suſpenſion* till next *Aſſembly*, ſhould be inflicted for ſuch grievous Errors found *relevant* and *proven* againſt Mr. *Simſon*; in which Caſe, theſe who were for his being

depoſed, ſeemed to be reſolved to *proteſt* an *diſſent* from the Sentence of the *Aſſembl* which might have introduced ſuch a la mentable Diviſion in this Church, as migh not have been ſoon eaſily ſettled.

And, on the other Hand, had he bee depoſed, after ſuch Profeſſions of Soundneſ (tho' I muſt own I do not ſee that the Con ſequences would have been ſo bad as in th former Caſe) yet it might have occaſione ſome obvious bad Effects, which I nee not expreſs.

It is evident, That in the Reaſonings o the *Aſſembly*, which were carried on wit great *Order* and *Gravity*, tho' with no ſma *Keeneſs* and *Concern*, every one who ſpok ſeemed to have an Impreſſion of the ba Conſequences of any Sentence that ſhoul be carried by a Vote or a ſmall Plurality and therefore, as they did not hurry th Matter, but ſpent many Hours in Reaſo ning to bring about an unanimous Reſolu tion, ſo they came, on both Hands, t yield to one another, and to center in Sentence, that appears in a great Meaſur to anſwer what every one had in View tho' perhaps not ſo fully as they could hav wiſhed.

That this may be ſet in a clear Light, i may be obſerved, That all were concerne that this Aſſembly ſhould give an ampl Teſtimony to the Truths of God, in th

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great and fundamental Doctrine of the *Holy Trinity*; this is done in the Narrative of this Sentence. In like Manner all were concerned to teſtify their Diſſatisfaction with Mr. *Simſon*'s Errors, and his Conduct in the Courſe of this Proceſs; and therefore, no Man pretended to ſay, that he did not deſerve *Depoſition*, tho' many thought, in Regard of the Profeſſions he had *now* made of his Soundneſs, it would be hard to inflict on him that Cenſure, and perhaps thought, after a Year's Suſpenſion, he might be again intruſted with the Charge of Youth. Others thought, That as he deſerved Depoſition, ſo it ought to be inflicted, and that, *inſtantly*, he ſhould be put out of all Capacity of Teaching or Preaching. After long Reaſoning, each of theſe came to yield ſome Part of their Mind. Theſe who were for a ſimple Suſpenſion came to grant, that it ſhould be *ſuch a Suſpenſion*, as ſhould not, after a particular Time, fall of itſelf; but that it ſhould be ſtill open to any ſucceeding Aſſembly, either to continue it, or proceed to further Cenſure, or do in it as they ſhould ſee Cauſe; and that even *this preſent Suſpenſion* ſhould not be reckoned the *final Deciſion* of this whole Affair, ſeeing another Libel for his contraveening the Act of Aſſembly 1717, whereby he was diſcharged to teach, according to the Manner he had expreſſed himſelf in his

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Anſwers to Mr. *Webſter*'s Libel, and that Presbyteries ſhould inſtruct their Commiſſioners to the next Aſſembly, that the Mind of the whole Church ſhould be known as to the final Determination of this Affair. This being yielded by theſe who argued for a ſimple Suſpenſion, theſe who were for immediate Depoſition, did not inſiſt further on that Demand, becauſe they judg'd, the *Aſſembly* by a Suſpenſion ſo expreſſed, and circumſtanced, had given a plain Teſtimony to Truth, and againſt Error, and had alſo provided againſt Mr. *Simſon*'s teaching or preaching, and that the Affair was ſtill open unto the next or ſubſequent Aſſembly: And altho', perhaps, each Party may have ſome Uneaſineſs, that the Sentence was not in all Points as they would have inclined, yet, the Conſideration of coming unto an unanimous Reſolution, and preventing of what, without Doubt, would have been a formidable Diviſion, I hope will preponderate both with Miniſters and Chriſtians, and make every ſincere Welwiſher to our *Zion* think that the good Hand of God hath been about them for Good.

But that you, or others to whom you may communicate what I have writ, may the better judge of what I have ſuggeſted, I here give you a ſhort Account of the Subſtance of the Sentence, ſo far as I can call it to Remembrance. It contains Firſt, a Narative

rative of what Mr. *Simſon* hath acknowledged in the Papers given in by him to the Aſſembly the 14th and 15th Inſtant, wherein he expreſſed himſelf in Terms more ſound than he had done before, both concerning the *Neceſſary-exiſtence* and Generation of the Son of God, and the Titles *ſummus Deus*, and the *Only True God*, as equally applicable to the Father and the Son, and not in any lower Senſe to the Son than to the Father, and concerning the Three Perſons of the Godhead being *One Subſtance or Eſſence in Number*. Theſe Sentiments, ſo far as I can remember, the Aſſembly judged ſound as ſo expreſſed;

They do nevertheleſs, in Conſideration of what is found relevant and proven againſt him, of his having taught, and utter'd what is ſubverſive of theſe Truths, and the Offence he hath given; Suſpended him from Teaching, Preaching, and all Exerciſe of any Eccleſiaſtical Function, until another Aſſembly ſhall think fit to take off this Sentence, and leave it to the next Aſſembly to do concerning him as they ſhall think fit. And likewiſe, there is a Reference to Preſbyteries to inſtruct their Members to the next Aſſembly as to what they ſhall think proper to be further done.

This I think is the Subſtance of the Sentence. And I hope hereby you will ſee that our Church have endeavoured to ſettle this Matter in a very

very agreeable Manner. And I shall only conclude with this humble Advice, That you would make the best Use you can of the plain Topicks that I have suggested, and that are founded on this Sentence, or that may otherwise occur to your self, for quieting the Minds of such as may be ready to charge this Church either with too much Lenity on the one Hand, or too much Severity on the other. That which is chiefly to be regarded is the Glory of God, and the Honour of his Truth; and next to that even the Reclaiming and Conviction of an Offender.

And who can say, but this End is in a great Measure attained by the Progress and Issue of this Affair; the Truth is asserted, Mr. *Simson* has retracted and renounced his Error, declared his Grief for the Trouble he has given to this Church, promised he shall never, thro' Grace, be found to do so any more; yet for what he hath done, he is under such a Sentence as puts him out of Case to teach or preach: And tho' the Church might indeed have proceeded to a more severe Sentence, without any Act of Injustice; yet, considering his Renunciation and Retraction, and Promise, I hope none will condemn them for what Compassion they have shewed to the poor Man, which may be a more probable Mean of reclaiming him fully, and confirming him in

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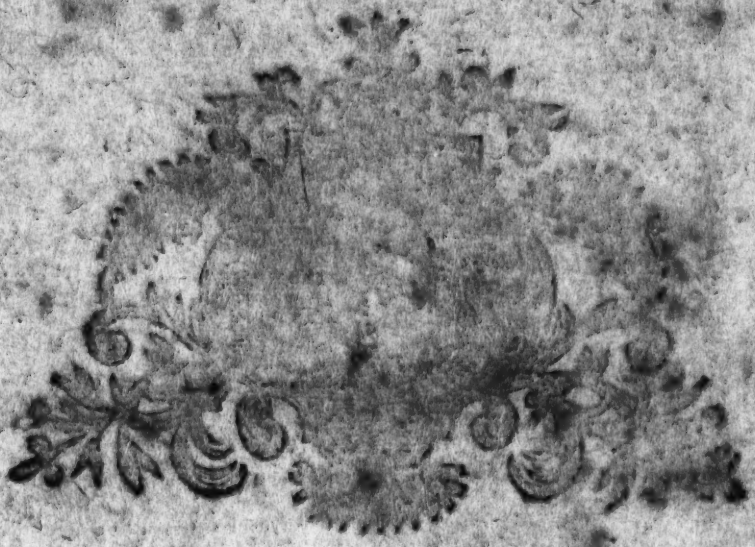
his *Profession* of *Soundness* and *Retraction* of his *Errors*, than a *Deposition* would have been, which perhaps might have driven him to Irritation, and some obvious irregular Steps. That the Lord may still preserve this poor Church from both *Error* and *Schism*, is and shall be the hearty Prayer of,

Yours, &c.